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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

September 16, 1932.

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Subject: "Cooking Chickens." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U.S.D.A.

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A letter in my mail a day or two ago inquired what to do about surplus chickens in the farm flock.

"Dear Aunt Sammy," said the letter, "We have on our place a good many full-grown hens which we don't want to keep and feed over the winter. I wonder if you could tell me several good ways to cook and serve these older fowls. Also I should like to know how to can chicken properly. Perhaps some day soon you will give us a chicken chat. I'll be listening for it."

That letter deserves a prompt answer, doesn't it? So I'm going to give the chicken chat today.

If you have lived on a farm, or if you're used to marketing for poultry, you know that chickens are sold as broilers or spring chickens, as fryers, and as fowls. A broiler or spring chicken is a very young chicken, usually about three months old, and very tender. A fryer is a larger chicken, three to six months old, but young enough to be tender. Fowls are full-grown hens.

If you're selecting live poultry for cooking or canning, you can tell by several signs whether it is in good condition. Is it heavy-weight for its size? Are the feathers in good condition? Does it have a bright red comb? Is the breastbone well covered with flesh? And is the skin in good condition? You can see the skin by separating the feathers.

Or suppose you are buying your poultry dressed at the market. What signs of good quality should you look for, then?

First you will want to check on the age of the bird. Young birds have soft, smooth, yellow feet; flexible breastbones, very little fat under the skin or on the entrails and vital organs; many pin feathers but few hairs. Older birds have rough feet; hard or tough breastbones; a good deal of fat under the skin and about the entrails and vital organs; few pin feathers and long hairs.

Now to check on the freshness of the chicken. Is the flesh firm yet neither stiff nor flabby? Does it give to the touch? Are the eyes bright and full, and the feet soft? Is the skin smooth and tender?

That's the news about selecting chicken. Now about cooking it. The cooking specialists tell me that the fundamental rules for cooking poultry are the same as those for cooking meat. You use a high temperature at first to sear the meat and develop flavor and then you finish the cooking at a lower temperature. For older chickens you use long slow cooking and methods and utensils such as you use for cooking any of the less tender cuts of meat. Young chicken is usually broiled, smothered or fried. As for the older chicken, you can boil it for salad or croquettes, you can stew it with dumplings or stew it

for chicken pie. Also, older chicken makes excellent casserole, fricassee, and chicken gumbo.

For Sunday dinner I don't know a nicer way to serve chicken than in a casserole. While we're speaking of it, how would you like to have good recipe for casserole chicken with vegetables? All right. Get your pencil and I'll get out the recipe. It's a good long recipe so be prepared for several minutes of writing. Let's see. The ingredients number nine. Here they are.

3 carrots	4 or 5-pound fowl
1 bunch of celery	2 tablespoons of butter or other fat
1 onion	1 cup of hot water
1 green pepper	1 cup of milk, and
	1 and 1/2 tablespoons of flour

I'll go over those nine ingredients again. (Repeat.)

Slice or chop the vegetables in very small pieces. Cut up the fowl, season it with salt and pepper, dust with flour and brown delicately in the fat. As the meat is removed from the frying pan, place it in a casserole or covered baking dish. Pour the chopped vegetables into the frying pan and let them absorb the browned fat. Then transfer them to the casserole, add a cup of hot water, cover, and cook in a slow oven (275 degrees F.) for 3 hours or longer if the fowl is very tough. Add more water from time to time if necessary. Just before serving, remove the pieces of fowl, and add the milk and flour, which have been mixed. Cook for ten minutes longer. Now pour the vegetable sauce over the chicken, or replace it in the sauce and serve from the casserole.

That's all of the recipe for chicken in casserole--a good recipe for an older chicken, as we mentioned, and a good dish for Sunday dinner for all the family.

Suppose now you are starting to plan a satisfying chicken dinner. You'll want one starchy vegetable and one succulent or green vegetable to go with the chicken. In some parts of the country boiled rice is a favorite for the starchy food. So is mashed potato. Sometimes dressing takes the place of a starchy vegetable when you have roast fowl. In that case two succulent vegetables are nice, or one vegetable and some crisp, tart salad. Some of the very best vegetables to go with chicken are spinach, broiled or stuffed tomatoes, or eggplant. Then a tart jelly also makes a good accompaniment. Some sort of fruit dessert is also nice.

Well, now maybe you'd like to know what the Menu Specialist planned for a Sunday chicken dinner. Here's her menu: Chicken casserole; Mashed potatoes; a green leaf vegetable--suit yourself as to the kind; Hot biscuits; Waldorf salad; and, a Deep-dish damson plum pie.

Once more, I'll repeat that menu. Chicken casserole; Mashed potatoes; a green-leaf vegetable; Hot biscuits; Waldorf salad; and a Deep-dish plum pie.

Waldorf salad, you know, is a combination of diced apple, chopped nuts and diced celery mixed with mayonnaise or some other dressing and served on crisp lettuce.

We haven't time today to talk about canning chicken. But we'll put that subject on our calendar for a coming event in the near future.

Monday - How to store vegetables for the winter.

